642
565 3. the free men;

4. people of caste, such as blacksmiths, etc. (see below);

5. slaves.

567 e. Slavery. -- A man became a slave in three ways: by violence, by obligation, or by birth.

567 1. By violence. If a war captive is important, he may be
727 killed or he may be held for ransom and treated with consideration.
554 A Fama captured in war could become an army chief or dignitary in the country of his captor and could found a family there. In no case could he be reduced to captivity on his own territory.

[60] If the vanquished is a man of caste, he is spared captivity and generally enters the service of the conquering Fama;
[608] if he is a sênanku of the victor, the latter gets rid of him by freeing him. Finally, if the captive has the same name as the victorious
[561] Fama, he is freed, because he is recognized as being a relative of the Fama.

When the captive is a free man of humble origin, he is sold by the Fama, unless the Fama gives him to his warriors.

567 2. By obligation. A free individual became a slave in
681 punishment for his crimes or misdemeanors; he was then sold for the
426 profit of the Fama. A fa could sell one of his children to meet his
● 858 debts, but he subsequently had to try to buy him back once he was freed of his obligations.

567 3. By birth. A woman slave bears only slaves. The slave born in the house is called a wolo-so. If a woman slave is got with child by a free man, she becomes free, as does her child. But if the mother is repudiated, she reverts to slavery, while the child remains free.

569 As the number of slaves grew, their organization became
644 complicated and hierarchic. The slaves under the Fama of Sêgou were divided into series, each having as chief the eldest of the slaves. The eldest of these chiefs became chief of the dyon-kuru or dyon-futu (ensemble of slaves). Monteil shows the important role this slave chief has played in the history of Sêgou. In fact, he was the spokesman for all the grievances of the slaves and often became the Fama's adviser. At the death of the Fama, the slave chief confirmed the power of his successor by assuring him or refusing him, the submission of all the slaves.

D. Position of Women

562 Women's society has remained much more impenetrable to European civilization. Women very rarely go to French schools, and unlike the men, who, during their military service and otherwise, are partly immersed in our system of civilization, they have few contacts with the Whites and appear to be even more attached to custom than their husbands. Very few speak French, and for all these [191] reasons their society has remained closed and very imperfectly known to the Whites.

562 Reasoning from what is known of their juridicial situation, we 858 have deduced their inferior position. Perhaps a better knowledge of their role and of their importance in the society will lead us to very different conclusions. From the legal point of view, a woman is always a minor; she belongs first to her own community, to which she owes obedience, then to her husband's community. When the marriage is legal, that is to say, when the husband has paid the matrimonial settlement, the children belong to the husband; if not, in the case of concubinage, the woman's family can claim the child, because it belongs to the family, as does everything of the mother's.

562 Her marriage is decided on by the fa; although in practice 582 the woman is often consulted indirectly beforehand, and she has a certain liberty in her choice. Even a slave can refuse to marry her 583 master, despite gifts and promises. But a woman is forbidden to marry someone she considers a relative, that is, someone who belongs to her paternal line and who bears the same name she does. Exogamy is the rule.

562 Yet, when a woman marries, she keeps her paternal name and her personal taboos; 593 sometimes she adds her name to that of her son, who normally bears the dyamu of his father. The woman remains very attached [75] to her family and goes to stay with them often. Among them she will find support in case of a difference of opinion [586] with her husband. In case of divorce through the fault of the husband, he loses all rights over the wife as well as the settlement he had paid.

595 In the system of polygamy, the first wife is mistress of the house; the other wives gather at her place for meals. She distributes [431] the husband's presents, but aside from these privileges, the rights of the wives are equal as are those of their children.

that she may speak to him freely. When the day of union comes, the wife herself prepares her husband's food; then she lies on the left side (the feminine side) and her husband on the right side, and she cannot be impregnated except by a union twice repeated.

These corporal techniques[1] are dictated and ordered by the religious imperatives which pervade the life of the Bambara from before his birth until after his death.

What we have said of the Bambara's religion and of his conception of the world enables us to understand that there cannot be for him a complete break between life and death: birth is a reincarnation; death is not destruction. This is why a man's life does not present one substantial unity but is divided into a certain number of distinct periods, each of which is inaugurated by a rite of transition that marks the death of an anterior state and the rebirth to a new life.

a. Before Birth

From the first month after his conception, the infant constitutes a person who receives a series of spiritual forces emanating from his father's side of the family and especially from the recently deceased ancestor whose name he will receive. At the same time, he inherits all of the paternal taboos, which the mother must respect during her pregnancy. It is only after his birth, at the time he receives his name, that the infant receives the spiritual forces coming from his mother's side. These forces are transmitted through the medium of the priest and the ancestors of the priest.

From then on, the infant is required to observe all the taboos of the beings who have had a part in the composition of his personality; he thus finds himself tightly bound to the society in which he will live.

b. Birth Rites

At birth the baby is washed with millet beer (1) (to purify him)

1. For all these rites, see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

[1 [i.e., sexual reproduction and childrearing; see pp. 117-119. -Ed. Note]

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1. A bonded person works for his food, just like a slave. His condition is worse than that of the slave, for in addition to his food, the latter receives a bit of cloth to cover himself, but the bonded person does not. A slave can ransom himself for a sum varying between 100 and 200 francs, and at present he can escape without fear of being pursued and without paying anything at all. A bonded person must pay the amount of his bond to the last cowrie shell, whether he escapes or not. There are Negroes who, for a certain amount, will give you one of their children for one or two years. These children are not paid since the amount has already been paid, but besides food they get clothing and some gratuities beyond the payment for their work. Lacking the proper words, the Bambara call this also, "bonding" even though it is basically a real "domestic service." When the agreed time has passed, these young people go back to their homes without any payment being made. Even though the Negroes call this bonding, they make a distinction: a) slavery is a stigma which always remains; b) true bonding is a stigma that does not disappear unless the bonded person himself pays the price of his bonding; c) the bonding which is called "domestic service" does not involve any stigma; they are workers and not menial laborers.